

EXPLORING TEACHER STRATEGIES IN PREPARING STUDENTS FOR ENGLISH SPEECH COMPETITIONS

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Abstract

This study investigated the strategies used by an English teacher in preparing an elementary school student for an English speech competition, as well as the challenges encountered during the coaching process at MIN 1 Kota Kediri. This study employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design. The participants were an external English speech coach (T1) as the primary participant and a student who had won an English speech competition (S1) as the triangulation participant. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The trustworthiness of the data was established through source and technique triangulation. The findings show that the teacher implemented six systematic strategies: memorization, pronunciation and fluency training, body language and performance training, repetitive practice and simulation, feedback and evaluation, and confidence building. The preparation process also faced several challenges, including students' difficulty in memorizing speech texts, pronunciation problems, nervousness, differences in individual abilities, and limited preparation time, which the teacher addressed through continuous guidance, repeated practice, and constructive feedback. These findings indicate that systematic, stage-by-stage coaching that combines linguistic and psychological preparation contributes positively to young learners' readiness and performance in English speech competitions.

Keywords: Teacher Strategies, English Speech Competition, Speaking Skills, Young Learners

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INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most important international languages for communication, education, science, and technology, and speaking is often regarded as the most challenging skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners because it requires learners to produce language spontaneously and confidently in real time. One activity that promotes students' speaking development is participation in English speech competitions, which provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their language proficiency, critical thinking, and self-confidence while learning to organize ideas and deliver messages effectively to an audience. At MIN 1 Kota Kediri, students are encouraged to take part in such competitions, yet preparing young learners for this kind of public performance is not a simple task.

Despite the benefits of speech competitions, students commonly face speaking anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and nervousness when performing in front of an audience, and these psychological factors can significantly limit their ability to demonstrate their actual language competence. Teachers therefore play a vital role in guiding and preparing students, implementing coaching strategies that can improve students' speaking abilities while simultaneously building their confidence and motivation. Previous studies have examined various strategies for teaching speaking, including task-based learning, interactive activities, gamification, and structured

feedback, showing that such approaches create meaningful learning experiences that encourage students to participate actively in speaking practice.

Although numerous studies have investigated teachers' strategies in teaching speaking and public speaking, most of this research has focused on junior high school, senior high school, and university students, so the findings may not fully represent the conditions and learning characteristics of younger learners. Research exploring teachers' strategies for preparing elementary school students, particularly in Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah), to participate in English speech competitions remains limited, even though young learners have distinct needs, motivation, and confidence levels that require different coaching approaches.

Addressing this gap, this study aims to: 1) identify the strategies used by the teacher to prepare a student for the English Speech Competition at MIN 1 Kota Kediri; and 2) describe the challenges faced by the teacher in implementing these strategies. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on speaking instruction and coaching strategies for young learners. Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for teachers, schools, and future researchers concerned with preparing elementary school students for English speech competitions.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to obtain a detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation without manipulating variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research was conducted at MIN 1 Kota Kediri, East Java, Indonesia, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants were an external English speech coach (T1), who served as the primary participant, and a student who had won an English speech competition (S1), who served as the triangulation participant.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with the teacher and the student to obtain in-depth information about the strategies used in preparing for the competition. Observations were carried out during coaching sessions to examine the actual implementation of these strategies, while documentation included speech texts, training videos, photographs of coaching activities, and records of student achievement.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles et al., 2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through source triangulation, by comparing information from the teacher and the student, and technique triangulation, by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the interview, observation, and documentation data revealed that the teacher did not prepare the student randomly. Instead, the teacher applied a systematic, staged coaching process while also encountering several challenges throughout the preparation period.

A. Teacher Strategies in Preparing the Student for the Speech Competition

Memorization Strategy: Before focusing on pronunciation, fluency, and performance, the student was required to master the speech text through memorization. The teacher divided the text into several sections and assigned the student to memorize them gradually. As T1 explained: *“Fokus utama pada tiga pertemuan awal adalah hafalan. Saya membagi teks menjadi beberapa bagian atau paragraf.”*

Pronunciation and Fluency Training Strategy: After the text was memorized, training moved to pronunciation and fluency, including correcting difficult words, improving intonation, and practicing pauses and word connections. T1 stated: *“Saya fokus pada pengucapan kata-kata yang benar... serta mengatur jeda dan tekanan dalam berbicara agar lebih alami.”*

Body Language and Performance Strategy: The teacher trained non-verbal aspects of delivery, including gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and posture, so that the student's body language supported the content of the speech being delivered.

Repetitive Practice and Simulation Strategy: The student performed the speech repeatedly and took part in simulations resembling the actual competition, including performing in front of classmates. According to T1: *“Pada pertemuan menjelang lomba, siswa diminta tampil penuh dari awal sampai akhir.”*

Feedback and Evaluation Strategy: Feedback was given immediately whenever mistakes were identified during practice, covering pronunciation, fluency, body language, mental readiness, and time management. T1 explained: *“Ketika menemukan kesalahan atau masalah pada saat latihan, saya langsung memberikan evaluasi dan memperbaikinya saat itu juga.”*

Confidence-Building Strategy: Because nervousness could undermine the student's performance, the teacher encouraged repeated practice and performance in front of others so that confidence would grow gradually before the competition.

Table 1. Summary of Teacher Strategies in Preparing the Student for the Speech Competition

Strategy Type	Operational Indicator	Sample Student Response
Memorization	Dividing the speech text into sections and requiring full mastery before the next stage.	<i>“Fokus utama pada tiga pertemuan awal adalah hafalan...” (T1)</i>
Pronunciation & Fluency	Correcting pronunciation, intonation, and pauses through repeated correction.	<i>“Saya fokus pada pengucapan kata-kata yang benar...” (T1)</i>
Body Language	Training gestures, facial expression, and eye contact during delivery.	<i>“Mereka diajarkan menggunakan gerakan tangan, ekspresi wajah, dan kontak mata...” (T1)</i>

Repetitive Practice & Simulation	Full run-throughs and mock performances resembling the actual competition.	<i>“Siswa diminta tampil penuh dari awal sampai akhir.” (T1)</i>
Feedback & Evaluation	Immediate correction of mistakes during each practice session.	<i>“Saya langsung memberikan evaluasi dan memperbaikinya saat itu juga.” (T1)</i>
Confidence Building	Encouraging frequent performance in front of others to reduce nervousness.	<i>“Semakin sering tampil dan berlatih, biasanya rasa grogi akan berkurang.” (T1)</i>

These findings show that memorization served as the foundation for the subsequent stages, consistent with (Harmer, 2007), who argues that careful preparation and familiarity with content are essential before a learner presents in public, while the continuous correction of pronunciation and fluency reflects (Brown, 2004) view that accurate pronunciation and smooth delivery are core components of speaking proficiency. Body language training, meanwhile, indicates that effective speech performance depends on both verbal and non-verbal communication, in line with (Harmer, 2007). The use of repetitive practice and simulation supports (Cameron, 2001), who explains that young learners benefit from repeated exposure and practice because repetition reinforces learning and builds confidence, while the immediate feedback provided throughout the process corresponds with (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), who state that feedback plays a crucial role in helping learners recognize their current performance and the areas that still need improvement.

B. Challenges Encountered by the Teacher in Preparing the Student

In addition to applying various strategies, the teacher also encountered several challenges during the preparation process, particularly related to individual differences and time constraints.

Students' Difficulties in Memorizing Speech Texts: Some students needed more time to memorize the speech text than others, which affected the pace of the overall preparation process.

Pronunciation Difficulties: Unfamiliar English vocabulary caused pronunciation errors, requiring the teacher to spend additional time on repeated correction and guidance.

Students' Nervousness and Lack of Confidence: Anxiety when performing in front of others, especially during simulations, was a common obstacle that required continuous encouragement and repeated performance practice to overcome.

Differences in Students' Abilities: Students differed in speaking ability, learning speed, and confidence, which required individualized guidance and adjusted training approaches.

Limited Preparation Time: The teacher had to manage a restricted training schedule while ensuring that memorization, pronunciation, fluency, body language, and confidence were all mastered before the competition.

These challenges reflect the individual differences that (Cameron, 2001) argues teachers of young learners must accommodate through adjusted instructional approaches. Pronunciation difficulties in particular align with (Brown, 2004), who notes that mastering unfamiliar sounds is

one of the more demanding aspects of speaking for language learners, so continuous correction and guided repetition remained necessary throughout the coaching process.

C. Coaching Process and the Student's Overall Readiness

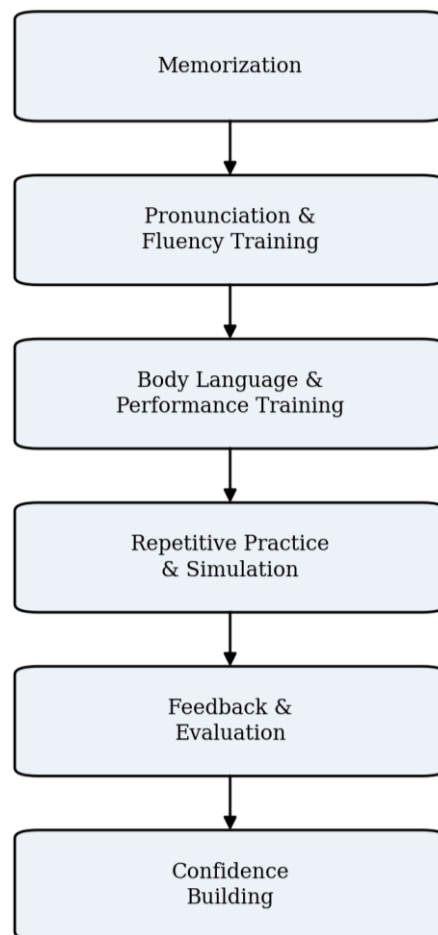


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Teacher's Coaching Strategy Sequence

In summary, the coaching process shows that preparing a young learner for an English speech competition requires more than repeated verbal drilling. By combining systematic memorization, pronunciation and fluency training, body language coaching, repetitive simulation, immediate feedback, and deliberate confidence building, the teacher gradually shifted the student from rigid, teacher-directed rehearsal toward a more confident and self-assured performance, addressing both the linguistic and psychological demands of competitive public speaking.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the teacher applied six systematic strategies in preparing a student for the English Speech Competition at MIN 1 Kota

Kediri: memorization, pronunciation and fluency training, body language and performance training, repetitive practice and simulation, feedback and evaluation, and confidence building. These strategies were implemented in stages, beginning with mastery of the speech text and gradually developing the student's linguistic, performance, and psychological readiness.

The study also found that the teacher faced several challenges during the preparation process, namely students' difficulty in memorizing speech texts, pronunciation problems, nervousness and lack of confidence, differences in students' abilities, and limited preparation time. These challenges were addressed through continuous guidance, repeated practice, individualized support, and constructive feedback. This study is limited to a single coach-student case at one elementary school, so its findings are not intended to be generalized to other educational levels or types of competitions.

For English Teachers: Teachers who coach students for speech competitions are encouraged to apply structured, stage-by-stage training that combines memorization, pronunciation and fluency practice, body language training, and confidence-building activities, while adjusting the pace to each student's individual needs. For Educational Institutions: Schools are encouraged to provide adequate time, facilities, and coordination between teachers, coaches, and parents to support students preparing for English speech competitions, particularly at the elementary level. For Students: Students are encouraged to practice consistently, actively respond to feedback, and take part in simulations to build both their speaking skills and self-confidence before competing. For Future Researchers: Future studies are encouraged to involve more teacher-student pairs, other educational levels, or mixed-methods designs to obtain a broader picture of teacher strategies in preparing students for speech competitions.

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